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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE AGENDA OF THE FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Letter dated 18 April 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly of an additional item of an urgent and important nature entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum concerning the request is attached as an annex to the present letter, which attests the urgency and importance of the matter. It is proposed that this new item be considered in plenary, without reference to a Main Committee.

I further have the honour to request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) N. H. BIEGMAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Explanatory memorandum

I

1. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction of 13 January 1993 (hereinafter referred to as "the Convention") is the first multilaterally negotiated disarmament agreement that aims to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction in a verifiable manner and will contribute to the realization of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The Convention will enter into force on 29 April 1997.

2. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is the intergovernmental institution established by the Convention. The seat of OPCW being in The Hague, the First Session of the Conference of States Parties will take place there from 6 to 23 May 1997.

3. OPCW is the institution established to achieve the object and purpose of the Convention, to ensure the implementation of its provisions, including those for international verification of compliance with it, and to provide a forum for consultation and cooperation among States parties to the Convention. Thus, OPCW will become an important instrument in the area of international peace and security. It will start its operations, including the inspections provided for under the regime of the Convention, shortly after the entry into force of the Convention.

4. The Convention provides for special cooperative relations to be established between OPCW on the one hand and the General Assembly and the Security Council on the other under the circumstances as defined in the Convention.

II

5. In the light of the foregoing, the States parties to the Convention feel that, as a matter of priority, OPCW should enter into negotiations with the United Nations both on an agreement concerning the general relationship between the United Nations and OPCW and on the use of United Nations laissez-passer by OPCW inspectors.

6. In the first place, there is an obvious need to establish and regulate the general relationship between the United Nations and OPCW. To that end it is highly desirable that the General Assembly invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations to enter into negotiations with OPCW with a view to concluding such an agreement, to be applied provisionally pending approval by the Assembly, and as appropriate by the States parties to the Convention.

7. Secondly, there is a concrete issue of great urgency. As soon as possible after the entry into force of the Convention, the OPCW inspection teams will have to be able to travel for inspection purposes. The Preparatory Committee of

OPCW has recommended the use of United Nations laissez-passer as official travel documents for the OPCW inspectors. The United Nations laissez-passer is the "preferred travel document". Moreover, some States parties to the Convention have already indicated that for them to allow the OPCW inspectors to carry out their tasks on those States' territories, it is a precondition that the inspectors carry a United Nations laissez-passer.

8. Obviously, expeditious action is needed in this respect. It is therefore essential that the Secretary-General also be mandated by the General Assembly to conclude with OPCW a temporary arrangement concerning the issuance of United Nations laissez-passer to OPCW inspectors, to be used as a travel document.

III

9. The adoption of a General Assembly resolution both inviting the Secretary-General to enter into a general relationship agreement with OPCW and authorizing him to conclude a temporary arrangement with OPCW with regard to the issuance of United Nations laissez-passer is clearly a matter of importance and urgency. In the absence of such agreements, OPCW would not be able to perform its duties promptly and effectively. This could be particularly harmful during the crucial first phase of the OPCW's existence when it has to make its mark as an effective organization.

10. The States parties consider that the speedy conclusion of the above-mentioned agreement and arrangement between the United Nations and OPCW would be of mutual benefit.